Depot Town Rag

Volume 24, Number 3

May 2010

Auto didactics gather here

100% FREE *RAG* CONTENT

Ypsi's Ace

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

Still waiting for the morning train

[with apologies to historian Bruce Catton and hundreds of potential commuters]

Don't stand out on the platform waiting for the commuter train that was expected in October. Instead, the A2/Detroit run will only operate for such events as UM football and Detroit's Thanksgiving Day parade, announced the SEMCOG transportation project director in mid-March.

City Councilmember Peter Murdock indicates locomotives have been found and work continues on rail cars and station improvements, but no date has been set for the $100 million federal earmark project that has been in the planning stages since 2005.

Planners were counting for this "demonstration line" to convince more riders which, in turn, would connect with other bus and transit systems in southeastern Michigan and reduce costs. At this time, SEMCOG is planning to contract with Amtrak to operate the service when it finally gets going.

CAR CRAZY CENTRAL

From John Prine's

AUTOMOBILE

Columbus sailed the ocean
Moses parted the sea
Dolores left me yesterday
Well, I think she took the key
To my automobile
I want my automobile
I want my automobile
Wanna drive it
all around this world

Automobiliana thrives at Ypsi's old depot

Ypsilanti Automotive History Museum

Michigan Firehouse Museum

Thursday Cruise Nights

Car Shows on streets, sidewalks, and in Riverside Park

Final Cruise Night of 2009 had cars lined up as far as Old Town Hall

Cruise Night challenges:

Discover Depot Town at the summer car shows

- Discover the best tables at the sidewalk cafés for car- and people-watching
- Discover the unique "tridge" connecting Riverside and Frog Island Parks
- Discover the best time to get in line for an ice cream cone
- Discover the specials under the awnings of shops up and down the street
- Discover creative new routes to public rest rooms
- Discover that crafty exhibitor thinking he's hiding his can of beer under a lawn chair next to his 1952 Belchfire Special

But, the most important discovery visitors make on the every-Thursday Cruise Nights is where to park when the street is full of vintage cars on exhibit. 2009's last Cruise Night saw exhibitors beginning to vie for their exhibit space at 3:30 p.m, quickly filling the spaces on East Cross Street, Rice Street, up the hill toward the Water Tower, and around the corner onto North Huron Street. The side lawn at Old Town Hall was full of exhibitors who showed up "just about on time." And they kept arriving until the 9 p.m. closing.

If you're not showing off a vintage automobile yourself, you'll want to get to the neighborhood early to get one of the nearly 300 parking places in the lots off River Street, Forest Avenue, Maple Street, or East Cross. When those are full, street-side parking can reach almost all the way to Belleville.

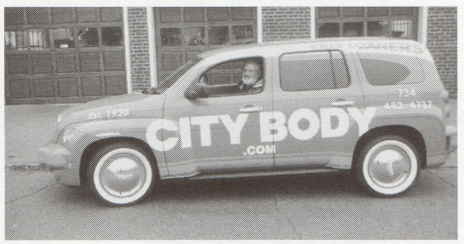
As the *Depot Town Rag* Scott Joplin-style tune says,

"Come by bike, or bus, or car; you won't have to travel far...."

Or come by canoe or kayak or roller board. Or helicopter, hot air balloon, or hang glider. Or take the train from Ann Arbor or Detroit (maybe next year!). Or come the day before and sleep out on Frog Island. Or rent one of the district apartments just for the summer.

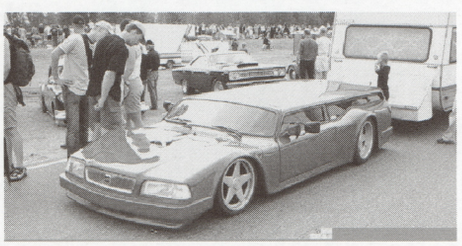
"Look at all the people, gathered 'round the depot. the good old days are here again..."

Worth a second look



City Body's Chevy HHR looks a lot like their 1949 Hudson logo with this creative paint job

You can save a lot on gas when your sports car has been converted to a pedal-pusher



There's no need to raise the garage door all the way for the lowest of the low-riders. Low wind resistance too.

Relay for Life returns to Riverside Park

Relay For Life is the American Cancer Society's signature activity offering everyone in the community an opportunity to participate in the fight against cancer. Teams of people camp out at Riverside Park to take turns walking or running around the path. Each team is asked to have a representative on the track at all times during the event. Relays are an overnight event, 24 hours in length.

Relay For Life is a life-changing event that brings together more than 3.5 million people around the country in similar events to:

- Celebrate the lives of those who have battled cancer. The strength of survivors inspires others to continue to fight.
- Remember loved ones lost to the disease. At Relay, people who have walked alongside people battling cancer can grieve and find healing.

Fight Back. We Relay because we have been touched by cancer and desperately want to put an end to the disease.

June 19-20 RELAY FOR LIFE
www.relayforlife.org/ypsilantimi

Car Talk with the Tappet Brothers

Radio hosts, brothers Tom and Ray Magliozzi, would fit in so easily on East Cross Street any Thursday night this summer that it's a wonder they haven't been here already

Anybody who stops by the car shows in Riverside Park or comes down to the neighborhood for the Thursday Cruise Nights is probably already hooked on *Car Talk,* a radio talk show broadcast weekly on National Public Radio. It's all talk of automobiles and repair, and it's one of the funniest radio shows in existence. Known as Click and Clack, the Tappet Brothers, the hosts are brothers Tom and Ray Magliozzi.

Car Talk sounds like a call-in radio show with listeners calling in questions about car maintenance and repair. The Brothers give sound advice, but it's not straight; their folksy humor is what makes the show a hit. Some of the humor is self-effacing; some is directed at their callers. Anyone with an unusual name or coming from a strange sounding town––like Ypsilanti— is sure to get roasted, toasted, and ridiculed.

Even the music between the show's "three halves" follows the auto theme. David Grisman's bluegrass hit, "Dawggy Mountain Breakdown" is the themesong for *Car Talk.*

Car Talk began on Boston's WBUR in 1977 and proliferated onto National Public Radio in 1987 where it is now heard on more than 370 stations and more than two million weekly listeners.

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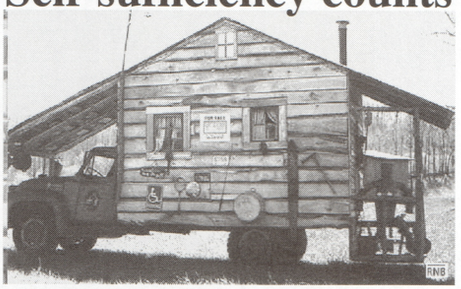
Cruise Nights

Adapted from Cobbs & Edwards'
"School Days (when we were a couple of kids)"

Nothing to do, Nellie Darling?
Oh, there's nothing to do, you say?
Let's take a trip
On the Memory Ship,
And sail back to the good old days.
Sail to the town by the depot,
Anchor outside in the street,
Look there and see,
There's you and there's me,
A couple of kids once more.
Cruise Nights, Cruise Nights,
Dear old golden Cruise Nights.
Shinin' and smilin' and joinin' the jive,
Wishin' that we had a chance to drive.
You were the queen of Depot Town,
I was a bashful, dorky clown,
And you wrote me by text,
"I'll kiss you next!"
When we were a couple of kids.

Self-sufficiency counts



"I built it myself," said the proud owners, as if they feared no one would believe them.

$5000 offered for evidence of Ypsi's ACE

The 19th century saw the sudden popularity of Ransom E. Olds's Oldsmobile runabout, manufactured in Lansing and inspiring up to 400 different car companies in Michigan to manufacture similar inexpensive automobiles.

The Ace automobile was manufactured at Apex Motors on River Street from 1919-22, but you won't find one at the Ypsilanti Automotive Heritage Museum; when the museum was founded in 1991, supporters Peter Fletcher and Skip Ungrodt offered a reward of $5000 for an Ace automobile to show in their comprehensive exhibition. None has yet been found.

The Ace Touring Car
Back seat: Madge Bird Waters, 7 yrs.
Front seat: Florence (Mrs. Thomas) Bird
917 West Cross Street, Ypsilanti

By 1904, the most successful of Michigan's new models—Detroit's Cadillac and the first Fords, together with the Oldsmobile—had made Michigan the leading automobile producer in the country—and, later, in the world.

A modern fable:
Jewish A/C memorialized

Four Goldberg brothers, Lowell, Norman, Hiram, and Max, invented and developed the first automobile air-conditioner and on July 17, 1936, the temperature in Detroit was 97 degrees. The four brothers walked into Henry Ford's office and sweet-talked his secretary into telling him that four gentlemen were there with the most exciting innovation in the auto industry since the electric starter.

Ford was curious and invited them into his office. They refused and instead asked that he come out to the parking lot to their car.

They persuaded him to get into the car, which was about 130 degrees, turned on the air conditioner, and cooled the car off immediately.

The old man got very excited and invited them back to the office where he offered them $3 million for the patent.

The brothers refused, saying they would settle for $2 million, but they wanted the recognition by having a label, 'The Goldberg Air-Conditioner,' on the dashboard of each car in which it was installed.

Henry Ford was more than just a little anti-Semitic and there was no way he was going to put the Goldbergs' name on two million Fords.

They haggled back and forth for about two hours, and finally agreed on $4 million and that just their first names would be shown.

To this day, all Ford air conditioners show Lo, Norm, Hi, and Max on the controls.

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Cars, bars, and a few weirdos? We'll cop that plea!

Cartoonist slammed Ypsi; where is he now?

Richard Guindon came to the *Detroit Free Press* in the 1980s and totally frosted some of the good citizens of Ypsilanti when he published snappy slogans like "Ypsilanti—Cars, Bars, and a Few Weirdos." Another showed a dumpy couple with metal detectors and the caption: "Discover Depot Town—Finders Keepers."

Depot Towners, holding with the concept that there's no such thing as bad publicity, were happy to be mentioned and to see their name spelled correctly. At least he didn't say "Ypsitucky"!

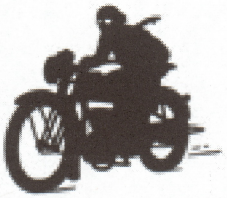
Another Guindon jab at Ypsilanti did not go over as well. "How Do You Get to Ypsilanti–and Why?" was left-handed enough to rankle our Old Guard, and some were so vociferous in their criticism that they took credit for running the cartoonist out of town. He disappeared almost as quickly as the tradition of daily newspapers.

Such was not the case, however. In 1984, Guindon appeared on *The Tonight Show* with Johnny Carson and then had a three-month exhibition of his snotty cartoons at the Flint Institute of Arts. When he returned from a tour of Europe, Guindon moved to Traverse City, setting up a studio in a section of that northern metropolis that looks an awful lot like the old commercial district down by Ypsilanti's depot. After working there for only eight months, his studio was destroyed by fire.

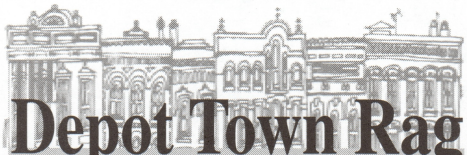
"I've lost 30-some years of work," said Guindon. "It's funny this building should wait 97 years for me to move into it before burning." There was no mention in any accounts of arson, but some Ypsilanti folks laid low for a while. More than 7000 cartoons and sketches burned in the April 1987 fire, but a few weeks later Guindon learned that his oldest friend, Irv Letofsky, Sunday editor of the *Los Angeles Times* "Calendar" section, had saved a copy of each of his syndicated cartoons over that decade.

In 1988, Guindon published *The Carp Chronicles*, commenting, "Nothing ever works out in Carp City. I don't know why. They're very nice people. It's not a pretty story, but it has to be told." Sounds a lot like some of the projects we have known in Ypsilanti and Detroit—and Traverse City—doesn't it?

In the next *Rag*:



Whatever happened to those charming "God's Children" and their cute little motorcycles? ...and other two-wheeler news



Depot Town Rag

"All the news that fits, we print"
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The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place
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To the editor:
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The Depot Town Association, Inc.

Gary McKeever, President
Michelle Shankwiler, Vice President
Ruth Ann Jamnick, Treasurer
Sandee French, Scy. & Past President
Website: www.depottown.org
DTA meets at 6:30 p.m on the third Wednesday of each month at Café Luwak, 42 East Cross Street.

YPSILANTI PRIDE

16th annual 15 May

PEOPLE RESTORING IMAGE & DEVELOPING THE ENVIRONMENT

Guinness Book's longest car/mobile bowling alley/ rifle range... *[Gas mileage figures not available]*

...and the more sedate runner-up

The behemoth was parked in the Frog Island lot one day probably because it couldn't turn the corner at Cross and River Streets. Dove-gray bench seats and sconces that once held bud-vases; wall-mounts for telephones and flat screen TVs hinted at previous luxuries. The interior smelled like teen-age vomit from a previous prom, but we wanted to ride in it anyway. We marveled at how you can rent a band, a tux, a corsage, and a big dress for an event, but you just can't beat the image of this Super Brobdignagian Pukemobile pulling up to front door of the high school gym.

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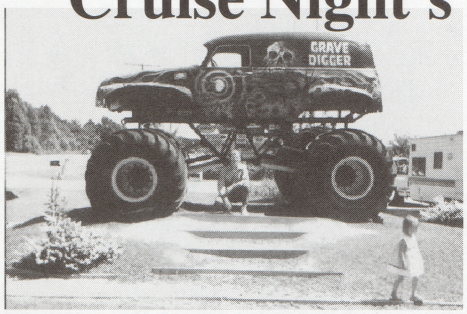
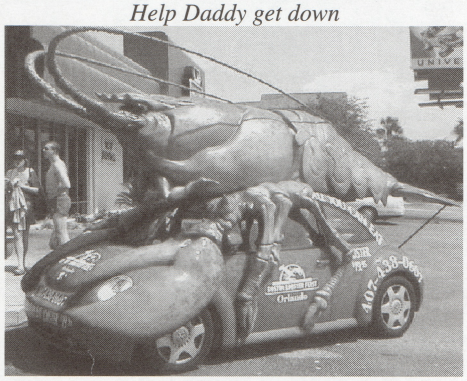
Cruise Night's dubious awards



Help Daddy get down

Dreamboat



Don't park too near that seafood restaurant

Graveyard Hauler

Cruisin' the block since the Fifties

Depot Town Cruise Nights started in the Freighthouse parking lot fifteen years ago with the Ypsi Street Rods group but, when they did not want to continue, John Tucker, Mickey Ichesco, and Linda French took them over under the name "Depot Town Forward" so the unique local events would not be discontinued.

Today's volunteers who keep the street show tradition going include Café Luwak's Forrest and Jim Karnopp who graciously donate the ice cream for the kids who participate in the hula hoop contests, John McMillan, Linda French, Belinda Domas, Alana Belski, Wendi Criblar, Old Towne Coin & Gold's Sharon Robine, Cecil Rollins, Sid Stone, Ron Pinsoneault, and Ted Mull from Ted's Auto Electric. And, after these many years, Mickey Ichesco still coordinates the weekly events throughout the summer.

Clover Computers donated several refurbished computers for the 50/50 raffle drawings. Crown House of Gifts/Ideation's Tom Ungrodt has donated many nice door prizes. The Auto Museum's Jack Miller generously helps with the insurance required to do the weekly events. Disc jockey Danny Wilson ("Doo-wop Dan") has been performing for Cruise Nights for the past several years.

"It's because of the involvement of these loyal volunteers and businesses that we are able to carry on with this weekly project," says Ichesco, and the entire community appreciates their efforts toward this grand cause.

My first car

Surely Jack Miller's first car had to be a Hudson, but what about the rest of the kids on this block?

"I was a porter at Gordell Desoto Plymouth in 1959 where I cleaned up this awesome **1959 white Sport Fury** convertible, dreaming that some day I would be able to have a car like this, when, lo and behold, the person who bought the car traded it in on another Plymouth in 1962 and, for a grand sum of $890 and $39 a month—courtesy of the Ypsilanti Savings Bank—I was able to purchase my dream car.

"There's a picture of it in the Auto Museum and Nelson Amos worked on a painting of it during last year's Cruise Nights."

–Mickey Ichesco

"My first car was a **1964 Volkswagen Beetle**." *-Linda French*

"I drove 13 of my best friends from Cass Tech to Belle Isle in my first car—a black **1940 Ford** 2-door coupe." *-Gary McKeever*

"My parents bought my sister Gerry and me a red **1959 Corvair**. It was an automatic, with the shift knob for park, drive, reverse being on the dash. I had graduated from Cleary College and she was a senior at St. Thomas.

"We would cruise the Chick-Inn. Much to our surprise one evening we were there watching who was cruising through when we were stunned to find our parents driving through in their baby blue 1959 Buick LeSabre convertible with the top down, waving and laughing.

"Everyone around us had a great laugh and they teased for a long time saying, 'Will your parents be through tonight?'"

-Ruth Ann Jamnick

"I must have been the coolest kid in Northville with my **'57 Chevy Bel Air**—light green and white with loads of Bondo. There was enough room between the grille and the radiator to store a six-pack of beer on the way to parties." *-Bill French*

5-9 p.m. Thursdays
CRUISE NIGHTS
through 9 September
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Another weekly show of vintage vehicles
[and vegetables] returns to the block
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Farmers' Market
Saturdays,
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in the Freighthouse Market Plaza
May 1 through Halloween

Regular Specials:

[Irregularly appropriate]

Ton-Up Motorcycle event coming in June

More than 1000 vintage motorcycles and scooters are expected to roar through Ypsilanti's Depot Town Saturday, June 26th, for the Inaugural Ton-Up Motorcycle Show and Music Festival. Celebrating café racers, custom motorcycles and scooters of the '50s, '60s and '70s, as well as period-inspired music and art. Organizers expect this event to attract thousands of enthusiasts from throughout the Midwest.

"First Friday" art offerings at Potts Studio

Different artists each month exhibit and sell their wearable and functional art along with music and creative camaraderie. The event is spilling over into the Market Plaza and is morphing into a gallery crawl. First Fridays in the evening. Potts Studio, 27 East Cross

"Ton Up" movies Tuesday nights at Café Racer

Bring snacks & beverages at 7 p.m. Movies of vintage motorcycles at 8 p.m. Bring your bike too! 10 East Cross, near the Huron River bridge.

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Sunday, 9–5, May 2,
Show N' Shine Car Show
Ypsi Area Street Rods
Riverside Park

Saturday, May 15
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Riverside Park
For more info: www.billetproof.com

Sunday, May 23
Michigan Vintage Volkswagen Show
Riverside Park
For more info: www.mvvc.net

Sunday, June 6
14th Annual Ypsilanti Orphan Car Show
Riverside Park

June 10 - September 9
Thursday evenings 5-9 (unless it rains)
Depot Town Cruise Nights
E. Cross St. in Depot Town

July 2, 3, 4
Michigan Camaro Superfest
Riverside Park
For more info: www.camarosuperfest.com

July 16
Auburn-Cord-Duesenberg Regional Meet
Riverside Park

August 20, 21, 22
Ypsilanti Heritage Festival
Riverside Park
Info: www.ypsilantiheritagefestival.com

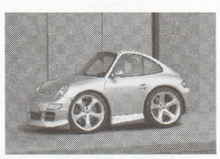
Saturday, August 28
Annual Firetruck Muster
Michigan Firehouse Museum

Sunday, October 3
SEMI Chapter Antique Truck Show
Riverside Park

It's going to be a difficult adjustment

How smart is that?

Just as last summer's Cruise Night season ended, Sidetrack's John McMillan began to ruminate about what a sad state of affairs we will have come to if the "Smart Car" concept should catch on with the designers of his own personal dream machines. 2009's final Cruise Night of the season had 280 classics and beaters looking for parking at the 5 p.m. opening bell—and they kept arriving well up to the 9 p.m. closing so, hey, John, if this should come to pass, maybe we could fit them all in between the river and the railroad track.



The Smorshce!

The Smorvette!

The Smamborghini!

The Smaudi A2 AWD

And eventually, even the Smustang may succumb to the current downsizing trend....

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